



Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 17, 2010

Testimony of Sandra Wilkos, MS
Associate Director of Sexual Assault Crisis Services, YWCA of New Britain

In support of HB 5473 AN ACT CONCERNING ACTIONS TO RECOVER DAMAGES FOR THE SEXUAL ABUSE, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OR SEXUAL ASSAULT OF A MINOR

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Committee, my name is Sandra Wilkos, and I am the Assistant Director to the New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Services. I have worked with adults and children to help them process and come to terms with the traumatizing effects sexual assault. I cannot express enough for the adults I have worked with who have confided that they continue to feel helpless, in that they are no longer able to bring justice against their perpetrator. Oftentimes I hear the words "why can't I do something about this now, I was afraid then?" It can be difficult to work through the healing process with a survivor of sexual assault, as I sit with them validating that their horrific experience was indeed horrific, while the current statute invalidates their experience. Again, they ask me, why doesn't the law see it this way? How am I to answer them?

I recently spoke with a male survivor on our crisis hotline. He was assaulted as a child by his father. It took him many, many years to come forward for reasons of shame and fear of not being believed. Finally he found the courage to disclose. He asked about his rights in regards to justice and the law. I had to tell him it was too late; that the statute of limitations, for this life changing, traumatizing crime against him, had run out. This man had to come to a point in his life when *he* was ready. Who are we to judge when a person is ready to disclose childhood abuse? How many of us would have the courage to tell, for instance, at the tender age of 10, facing intense fear, shame, & the loss of their family that they are being abused? And in fact, many survivors of childhood sexual abuse do not come forward until later adulthood for exactly those reasons just mentioned. Therefore, I ask, for the many survivors/victims of childhood sexual abuse that HB 5473 is passed, in the hope that their voice at some point in their lifetime can and will be heard.

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